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A TREASURY OF POEMS

BY

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA



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PART I
LYRICS

PROLOGUE

BELOVED, I am accursed
With a thirst to dream and build
Which grows to a deeper thirst
The moment it is fulfilled.

These feet are full of fire
Increasing all the time,
And they never seem to tire
In their difficult upward climb.

Being ever in love with quest,
I am friends with the mountain-tops,
In movement alone is rest,
Unendurable when it stops.

ENTREATY

MINE be forever that simplicity
Which probes the heart of things, and in a flash
Arrives, untrammelled and unproud,
At the deep secret of the fragility
Of insect-wings sun-wooded under golden beams,
Of the dark-sapphired rapture of the rainy cloud,
Of evening light as grey as burned-out ash:
O may I be allowed
Access unto the heart-core of these simple things!

THE CAMEL DRIVER DREAMS OF HIS GOD

PALE pink dawns and pure gold noons and grey-green
evenfalls

Immemorially enamel

The solitary desert track by which He goes.

If you have ears you'll hear the uncanny way He calls
Athwart the desert—if eyes, you'll see its sands blush
into rose on rose,

Stained by the shadow of His calm horizon-humpèd
camel.

My God, you ask? why, He is a camel driver who exists
Beyond the margin of our dreams, daring the desert climb
Of aeon-spread tranquillity;

He is garbed in the self-glow of nakedness, turbaned in
flaming mists

Of memories floating about the distant summit-points of
time,

His camel's hoof-prints changing to crystal wells at every
footfall in the sands.

HOMING CRANES

GREY-WHITE cranes in silent evening-flocks
Go flying over hills, while the grey-white stains
Of slow clouds cover the sky, which no more catches
The farewell colours of the day. Stillness reigns!
*Life is at its evenfall, thoughts are flying homeward,
Grey-white cranes!*

All day long they lingered by the river,
Strange images along the shimmering water's edge,
Their bosoms noonday-throbbing, and their wings a-
quiver
Their very shadows on the sands aflame
*My cranes are flying homeward in the dusk on some last journey,
Their wings are tired!*

LYRIC OF A MOOD

I LOVE a blue lagoon
And the winds of eve that swoon,
And the rising of the moon,
Wan and chill;
I love a bird in flight,
And the quiet silver light
Of a cloud on the lone height
Of some far hill.

I love the squirrels which
Make branches stir and twitch,
I love the blushing-rich
Fruits of a tree;
I love the fugitive
Pale leaves that only live
A day and do forgive
Eternity.

I love the severing mark
On the horizon's arc
Cleaving the light and dark
At evening's close;
I love the lonely pull
Of the white moon at full,
I love the wonderful
Sleep of the rose.

I am a lover whose
Being is full of hues,
And mysteries and clues
Of darkling time. . . .
I dwell within the heart,
Untroubled and apart,
I am the soul of art,
A lord of rhyme.

FLOWER AND FRUIT

A LONENESS dwells above
This tired and troubled world of loneliness
In a pure hush of time-unshadowed love,
Itself its own caress.

Withdrawn from the grey grooves
Of customary behaviour, thought and speech,
Garbed in divine simplicity, it moves
Beyond its own high reach.

Around its tranquil seat
Hours are as shadowy vassals which behold
Night offer fruit of silver at its feet,
And day, its flower of gold.

LYRIC OF YEARNING

I WANT to be a singer of great beauty,
I want my songs to drip with colours drawn
From the young sunrise which fulfils its duty
To a new day's dawn.

I want to be a singer of deep wonder
Such as inherits vast unplumbèd skies,
Each song of mine, cloudful of flame and thunder,
To take you by surprise.

I want the quietness of eve to linger
About my songs pregnant with starry power:
O mould me into your immortal singer
Hour upon passing hour!

CONTEMPLATION

OF-TIMES I lapse into a stillness that
Seems to clutch at
High music wandering in spheres
Beyond our laughter and our tears.
I wait
Holding my breath,
Embodiment of a starry state
Stranger to space and time and death.

Who knows me then?
I seem but part of a motley crowd of men,
And yet have I cast aside this trap of clay
And gone beyond, to some faraway
Domain where the light is pure
And every dream and vision burgeons sure.
From that wondrous realm this world looks story-
strange,
And the one striking thing about the world
Is change.

Change is monotonous; the changeless brims
With rich variety.
Ah, in that state this body and these limbs
Become as thirst without satiety
And yet fulfilled.
Stillness is the Master who must build
And fashion things
Of enduring loveliness.

TIME'S TRACTOR

THE moon is a sickle
And heaven an ample field,
Its harvest never fickle
In its yellow-silver yield.
But nothing is exacter
Than the sharp and shearing climb
Of Time's tremendous tractor
That sheareth all the time.

All heaven is becoming
A giant harvest dream,
And the star-peasants humming
Of some new earth's regime,
Since heaven shall lay reliance
On future man's domain
Of ever-growing science
And his all-conquering brain.

The moon, it is a sickle,
And heaven a field of blue,
The starry sweat doth trickle
To bring the harvest through;
But Time's old tractor labours
Between man's death and birth,
And gods and men grow neighbours
And heaven yields to earth.

NIGHT

NOTHING of her is loud or ribald,
Black Cat Night at the threshold lies
Glossy-pawed and glass-eyeballed,
Green and cold are her countless eyes,
Her whiskers are pale wisps of mist
Without a twirl, without a twist.

Silence scampers about the house
Nibbling at moments dropped as grain
Nobody ever can pick up again—
Silence—a tremulous silver-grey mouse. . . .

Black Cat takes it unawares,
Chasing it down the ebony stairs,
And then Silence, a mouse of grey
Silver, becomes its helpless prey.

*(The country carts drag over grains
Of crunched gravel and cold grey stones. . . .)*

The Cat is crunching the naked bones
Of the grey mouse of which nothing remains
Except, in the sky, a few red tones
And, at the threshold, a few red stains!

THE POET

ALONE in a loud world of men
His wonder-words he sits and spins.
Nay, do not scorn the poet's pen,
It is a flashing sword that wins.

He is a lord of eves and morns,
A master-traveller of repose;
Although his feet are bruised by thorns,
His mind is like a shining rose.

His vision flows from shape to shape,
Fulfilled, all details in him cease.
No curve or colour dare escape
His hand that moulds the masterpiece.

Alone, in a loud world of men,
A silent traveller of repose,
Do not approach the poet when
Your mind is in a mood for prose.

LYRIC OF OPTIMISM

LET not grief
Or hurt embitter
Life which is so very brief;
Can't you see the glad sun glitter
On the leaf
And the stone?
Can't you hear the small bird twitter
Merrily, alone?

Never be
Bruised or broken
By life's hollow misery,
Dark deeds done or harsh words spoken.
All men's deeds and all men's words
Are as shadows which are done
When the sad heart wakes and heaves
To the joy of singing birds
And the hush of green-lit leaves
Under the white-climbing sun.

BEAUTY'S SECRET

MAN is a sad and old routine
Between the *is* and *might-have-been*,
And life doth still exist
Because of all that it has missed;
While Beauty, since the world began,
Hath ever walked in deeper pride
Each time a dream has been denied
To man.

Stern irony is out to break
Our dearest selves for our own sake;
And unfulfilment ever was
The sustenance of Time, which draws
Its triumph out of our defeat,
While Beauty, shadow-haunted, goes
Scorning our thorny ways, to meet
The rose.

JUST BE BEAUTIFUL

THE long, low evening hush
 Resembles purple plush;
Water is blue like silk
And clouds are white as wool:
The role of true beauty
Is to be just beautiful.

The trembling leaves that toss
Assume a satin gloss,
While everywhere around
You feel her raptured pull:
The role of true beauty
Is to be just beautiful.

HEROISM

AGONY'S red-lit fires
Leap up like tongues that speak
Of dreams and longings laid upon stern pyres,
Of life burned out with all its old desires;
And now the lesser self, a pale-hued streak,
Widens to sunset on some spirit-peak.

Be beautiful, my soul!
Under all storm and stress
Remain thrice conscious of the ultimate goal.
Hold circumstance under your high control
And let all anguish, deeper than our guess,
Lead unto pure heroic loveliness.

Even while breaking, be
Splendid and all serene.
Break, if you must be broken, like a tree
Breaking into a shining ecstasy,
To burgeoned whiteness and to leafing green
With whole horizons glimpsed its boughs between.

LINES ON AFTER-SUNSET

THE sun went down in gold and brown,
And a small bird dropped its last pure note,
Then there was a stillness in the ample heavens
Matching the stillness in its throat.

The yellow day turned ashen grey
As the flame in man must also turn.
And yet, despite this neighbourhood of dying
We dream and ache and yearn.

DARK GIFT

STRANGE Today! from you I borrow
Pain's envenomed cup.

I am not afraid of sorrow :
You may bring me more tomorrow
When you wake me up.

To horizon-hues you serve us,
Hues that ache and shift,
Like to bows of grief you curve us:
But, Today! I am not nervous
Of your darkest gift!

TEMPO

NOW will I bare this bosom to the sun,
The scorching sun of new, tremendous forces
Rising above the darkness of man's days;
I am but one
Amidst the million singers in whom courses
The urge of ever-new and difficult ways
Of song and sentiment.
A singer is at best an instrument
Striking man's melodies which resound and raise
The silence of the gods like a veil;
He woos not merely beauty, but the sharp
Political dissensions of his age.
Life throbs on every string which makes his harp,
Sunsets and human blood redden his page.

There was a time, but now that time is past,
When I would shut myself up like a strange ascetic
Revolving on some far sidereal vast
As though I were an unembodied thing,
Stranger to limb and heart. It is pathetic
To be possessor of a human body
And yet, reject it. Life is like a ring
With fire for centre. Nothing is as bawdy
As the betrayal of these very limbs
In inaction. O Priest! what rich and gaudy
Prayers and hymns
You bring
To knock the truth out of all human reason!
Pain and experience make a poet's season!

NOSTALGIA

I WANT to go back home,
My feet are sore.
I do not want to roam
Any more.

I want to go and meet
My Love who calls,
I want to rid my feet
Of footfalls.

Desire itself grows mute,
The sky above
Plays the magic flute
Of old love.

All the new loves pass
Like shadows in
The soul's high-mirrored glass
Of discipline.

Time is the coloured sense
Which stirs and stops
Upon the soul's immense
White mountain-tops

Whose crests I yearn to climb,
Fixed as a star,
To reach beyond all time
My Love a-far.

REVELATION

O POET ! it is evenfall,
A star is trembling on the hill.
What though a hundred echoes call,
Be very still, be very still.
You shall now master, once for all,
The diamond centre of your will.

The wind that wanders cries alas!
Time's flame is flickering in the gale,
All beauty passes, let it pass,
Brief shadow in a faery tale.
Shatter illusion's mirrored glass
'And learn to see behind the veil.

No fleeting colours shall delude
Your eyes which open on the Eye
Which twinkles in the solitude
Of some serene interior sky.
The veils have dropped, your Soul is nude,
For she has bade her last good-bye.

EPILOGUE

FORGIVE me, Beauty! if my pen
Dares to express you among men;
My pen which is so very weak
And hardly has a right to speak.

*You dwell above our dream, above
Our deepest longing, deepest love;
You are an essence that belongs
To a white afterhood of songs.*

*O how shall words convey your lush
Joyance, highwatermark of hush?
You dwell in every speck and grain
But ere we touch you, you are pain.*

*Forgive me, Beauty! if my song
Follows your footfalls all day long;
You understand my ache and grant
I am a poet and must chant.*

PART II

HUES AND WHISPERS

(Poems of Nature and Man)

WHEN I was young I loved to roam
Across wide moors and lonely woods,
Whether at dawn or noon or gloam,
One wondering Mood among myriad moods.
And everything I heard and saw
Seemed to fulfil some subtle law
Of my most secret being.
And even Nature seemed to draw
A rarer hue, a deeper awe,
Out of the act of seeing.

You well might then have called my eyes
Nature-imbibing drunkards who
Grew giddy watching butterflies
And heaven's sweetly-pouring blue.
The faintest fragrance seemed to spell
And hold in thrall my sense of smell,
Keen with a drunk delight.
In those glad days I used to dwell
Like any hermit in his cell,
In smell and touch and sight.

But now the need for them is done—
A lonely inward way I wend,
And deeper days are now begun
Upon a deeper plane, my Friend!
Where all the outer colours dim,
And a white quiet seems to brim
Stainless and pure and strange.
Towards the Inner Light of Him
I rise, discovering in each limb
A high, miraculous change.

So, now, a singing woodland-bird
Is but a golden chance for me
To listen to His Note unheard
Sung in His clear Eternity.
Each blossom that I see but brings
My soul the Knowledge that there springs,
Beyond its form, a bloom
Whose image poet never sings
Since It, in his imaginings,
Was never given room.

Nature becometh now at best
A weariness of sound and shape
From which I do withdraw and rest
In mystical divine escape,
Within a peace that naught expends,
Which beauty neither breaks nor bends
According to her will,
A peace of power that descends
Upon me who have reached the ends
Of Time to blossom still!

I dwell alone in a sublime
Ingathered happiness of Him,
And that is why I have no time
To watch the daylight dawn or dim
Upon the hills, or count the sum
Of stars in night's blue lonelidom,
Or hear the waters roll:
I have grown strangely deaf and dumb
To hues and whispers that would come
And occupy my Soul.

I re-interpret all your powers,
O Nature! and your several loves
That take the form of stones and flowers
And dove-grey clouds and foam-white doves.
Indeed, I change the whole delight
Of you between each day and night,
And kindle in your clod
A lovely ever-living Light
Through this new miracle of Sight
Granted to me by God.

THE MYSTERY

A TURQUOISE depth of heaven bends—
Alas! how shall we ever know
Where it begins and where it ends,
This depth of turquoise glow?

A moon comes like an amber ball
Out of the ocean slowly rolled,
It is the evening's lonely call
Recurring as of old.

And O! to think this little eye
Can with an equal depth commune
With yonder blue-concaving sky
Rich with a yellow moon!

THE WORM

UPON a rock so still and firm
I watched a piteous streak,
God imaged to a feeble worm,
Mechanical and weak.

O what a mystic homage, friend!
He comes to pay Himself:
And that is why He doth descend
Into this fragile elf.

To me the worm has always been
A thing of inward light,
A shining star of heaven when seen
In depths of deeper sight.

It is a secret-sailing boat
Bearing God's merchandise
Across wide ages set afloat
Beyond the veil of eyes.

It is an image of ourselves
Wrecked on a rock of pain
Where each of us in silence delves
For the One Self again!

Upon His Rock so still and strong
Each one, His prison-term,
Fulfilling, we move along
Like any woodland-worm.

Exposed to sun and shade and shock
Of wind, we breathe and dwell
Fulfilling Him who is the rock—
Yea, and the worm as well!

CONTENTMENT

I AM not any more in haste,
My quiet nothing can destroy,
Since I have learned to dream and taste
The soul's unfathomable joy.

The desert of my heart hath burst
Into a lyric light of bloom.
This new-born spiritual thirst
For any other leaves no room!

I do not fret, I do not strive,
Since everything seems swiftly done.
How glad I am to be alive
Under the moon, under the sun.

This rich and blue-born day of March
Has passed into my veins like bliss.
My vision, lo! becomes an arch
Of limpid sheen beneath its kiss.

I sit and watch the white clouds pass
Like ancient travellers overhead
As though reflected from a glass
Standing beside some Dreamer's bed.

I glimpse grey squirrels flicker by
And hear the chirping of the birds,
While in the heart I sense a high
Process of images and words.

The universe outside is but
The reflex of the one within
In time and space securely shut
Up in a secret discipline.

If I should only cease to know
And feel and touch and hear and see,
I wonder where it all would go,
I wonder what the world would be!

Behold, in utter calm I court
The beauty of the world and find
Though, soul- withdrawn, I yet support
Its long existence with the mind.

For if I were to dwell withdrawn
And slip into pure consciousness,
Beauty could never wander on
Through time-worlds in her gypsy dress.

SONG OF THE ROAD

THE sooner you take the road
The better for you, my feet!
Each one of your steps has long been owed
To the one whom you go to meet.

The sooner you tread it, the better!
For the spirit begins to tire
Of its urge in your feet that are only a fetter
Until they have trod through fire.

Alas! do you still look back
At the sleep that is over and done?
Nay, look in front and behold your track
Washed gold in the rising sun.

With naked truth for a staff
And faith for your very own,
With a care-free song and a cheerful laugh
You must take the road, alone.

Who calls you thus from behind?
Who beckons to you from the grave?
Tell them that now you are free as the wind,
And free as the wild blue wave.

Does memory raise her voice
And tempt you back to her pain?
Nay, tell her that you have made your choice
And will never look back again.

O let the whole world mock
At you, Light's lonely bard!
Who knows, some day it may come and knock
At your door and find it barred!

And then when it turns away
It will turn away in tears,
And call to Him on a sudden day,
One day in its aeons of years,

And surely He will respond
From the depths of His dark profound
And reveal to the world the light beyond
Wherethrough it shall see you crowned.

TO WORDSWORTH

YOUR heart leapt up when you beheld
A rainbow in the sky,
While, unlike yours, mine own is spelled
Into a stillness high,
In which the rainbow is compelled
To put its colours by!

For, after all, a rainbow seems
To enter me for light
Other than that which only gleams
Seven-coloured to the sight.
Its seven-tinted glory dreams
Within me, of the white.

God's ring of colourless control
Which worketh low and high
Manoeuvring the painted whole
Of earth and sea and sky.
Its power is centred in my soul
And nevermore shall die.

Although in sweet companionship
With rainbow, flower and stream
You moved, and at your finger-tip
Had every shade and gleam,
You never really had a grip
Over the deeper Dream,

The Dream that makes all Nature pass
Into an essence rare,
From the dew-drop upon the grass
To the rainbow in the air,
Reflections in the mirrored glass
Of some huge Unaware!

Although you were so deeply fond
Of Nature and her kind
Whose every detail was a wand
Which called up in your mind
Dim images of the Beyond—
You yet did never find

The plane from where all beauty grows
Into a fiery Nil
Of deeper Beauty in repose
Outworking like a Will
That shall, the rainbow and the rose
In deeper ways fulfil.

But then, you see, you never had
A Master like our own,
Who in all Nature's Beauty clad
Sits working out alone
A Light of Spirit which will add
Its unknown to the known!

THE CIRCUS

THE sky is a wide circus-tent
Pitched in the Long Ago,
While time is the advertisement
Of a long circus-show.

The Manager behind the blue
Is very very proud
To see the air-performer who
Is balancing a cloud!

A golden lion is the sun
Who gives the world a treat
From dawn until the day is done
With his diurnal feat!

And O the moon so full and slow,
Is like a silver mare.
Which at the Master's shout of 'Go!'
Goes speeding through the air.

The lightning is an acrobat
Who, with a yellow swoop
Of light that is worth gazing at,
A-sudden, loops the loop.

While through a still eternity
The stars keep whirling round
Performing cycle-tricks, but we
Can never hear a sound!

The wind, he is the circus-clown
You cannot photograph
While he goes moving up and down
To make the whole world laugh!

No other audience He craves
Who doth the show control
Than the applauding ocean-waves
And my one watching soul!

SOUL AND SQUIRREL

MY soul unto the squirrel harks,
Since both of them forever bear
Fate's grey and dusky finger-marks,
Squirrel and soul, in equal share.

Perhaps, O squirrel! on your back
Each sunbeam, like a seeker, runs
Along the stripes—and each a track
Leading beyond all rising suns!

And surely on each murky stripe
Upon my soul, the world has stained,
His rays go running in a ripe
Rapture towards the Unattained?

Squirrel! who are so like my Soul!
Let us rejoice because our marks
Are leading Light towards a Goal
Lying beyond their dusks and darks!

SPRING

MAGICIAN! what a shining power
Your wand exerts o'er field and grove
Which sets them suddenly in flower,
Purple and yellow, white and mauve!

What laden baskets in your hand
Of blooms that suddenly begin:
How can we hope to understand
The way you work the colours in?

What lavish scattering of births,
What clustered breaths of flowering lives!
The budding trees are bridegroom Earth's
Gaudily-ornamented wives!

What ecstasy in every sprout
Whether of blossoms or of wings!
See how the joyous birds run out
With voices that are honey-springs.

Magician! do you never tire
Of playing coloured melodies,
Of setting woods and groves on fire
And working miracles of bees

That shoot like arrows here and there
Dipped in the nectared cups of flowers
Which from the azure bow of air
You aim from your invisible towers?

O Spring! O gaudy-turbaned one!
Magician of the seasons! when
Your many wonders are begun
In wood and field and grove and glen,

I know that in my soul somewhere
The world has prayed for coloured hours,
And that is why, reflected there,
You are performing tricks of flowers,

And, like a conjuror, to strange words
Of magic, you release the light
Edging the clouds, and free your birds
That gladden all the earth with flight.

O Springtime! with your hue and hum,
So long as earth is grey with grief,
Reflected from within, you come
With your wild cheer of bird and leaf.

Since you are but the outer proof
Of the glad season which one knows
When from time's season—hopes aloof,
His soul has reached the eternal Rose.

SONG OF LONELINESS

I AM lonely of heart tonight,
I am lonely of heart, my Love!
As yonder crescent-light
That wanders alone above.
And even as that crescent I
Go silently sailing by,
With a fullness, dark and high,
Which as yet it knows not of.

I am very lonely of heart,
I am lonely of heart tonight.
For I move alone and apart
On a strange, unfamiliar height;
Without a whisper or word,
I pass the world by, unheard,
For my soul is a lonely bird
That is winging a lonely flight.

I am lonely of heart, yet proud
Of a loneliness for your sake.
I am lonely as one last cloud
Of rain about to break;
I am lonely as a lone wind
That leaves the whole world behind,
Or as a last star you find
In a bare heaven, awake.

I am lonely of heart, O Sweet!
I am very lonely of soul,
But that is because my feet
Are moving towards the goal.

My lonely lamp is shedding
Its light on the path I am treading,
And the path is the lonely wedding
Of celestial self-control!

I am lonely of heart tonight,
I am very lonely, my God!
Like a very lonely light
Through moonless darks I plod.
But there is an ecstasy
In the depths of this lonesome Me
Which knows that the Path to Thee
Was the loneliest ever trod.

SONG OF BEAUTY

NOW that I have begun to spend
My days in dreams apart,
I realize there is no end
To beauty in the heart.

There is no end to beauty, and
There is no end to love:
The cloud, the water and the land,
The parrot and the dove

Have made the silence of my dreams
Their safe, eternal haunt,
And that is why to me it seems
They never are in want.

The stone, the worm, the gnat, the newt,
The squirrel and the toad
Are the creation of the flute
My soul plays on the road.

The giddy wind, the gaudy bloom,
The bird, the blade, the twig,
Are given more than elbow-room
In vision that is big.

The comet and the meteorite,
Sun setting and moon-rise
Are ancient guests I do invite
Unto a depth of Eyes.

The million lights that wheel and spin
Whitely across the bend
Of universes, all begin
In me, but never end.

This many-mooded, many-stressed
Beauty of worlds that roll
Is every moment being expressed
Through my invisible soul.

Now that I have begun, O friend!
To dwell and dream apart,
I know there cannot be an end
To beauty in the heart.

TRAVELLER

THE last word has been spoken,
The past is dead;
The bonds of death are broken—
The sky is red
With Dawn that has woken
To greet my tread.

A fire-message flying,
It comes from the Vast,
In strange colours dyeing
My dreams of the past.
My soul is a sea-gull crying
For the Deep at last!

No bond or rule or code
Shall my Seeking cramp,
For I tread the untrammelled Road,
A relationless Tramp
Bearing to the Light's Abode
A lonely clay-lamp.

Courageous Advancer,
Without rest or sleep,
Each footfall a dancer
On God's blue Deep.
I never'll answer,
Though the whole world weep,
Though the whole world query,
And the whole world ask—
I'll quietly bury
Myself in His Task,
While it looks on my very
Ambiguous mask.

Swiftly I climb now
Sky upon sky.
All is sublime now,
Voiceless and high.
I have no time now
For any reply.

I am already
Lit with the old
Deathless and steady
Flame you behold
Reflexed as yon heady
Sunrise of gold.

No halting, no slowing
Of speed, nor delay.
There is no knowing
What sight on the Way
Shall meet me while going,
Nobody can say.

No stopping, no straying,
Nor a feeling of dire
Despair, nor betraying
By footfalls that tire,
Of the Way that is playing
Its Music of Fire.

No dread of disaster—
A perfect control
Over speed, I go faster
Towards the sure Goal,

I am going to the Master
Who dreams of my soul.

With a heart full of meekness
And a Vision supreme,
With a striking uniqueness
I go to my Dream,
All weariness, weakness
Exiled from the Scheme.

The last word is spoken,
The past is done,
The fetters are broken
One after one,
The Dawn has awoken
A fire-red sun.

ATTAINMENT

THERE are so many ways of reaching Thee,
So many ways;
Some take eternities, while others
But a few days.
Some reach Thee at once, and others
Through long delays.

Some tread a road of flowers, Master!
Others, a hard
Path of stones; to some Thy door is open,
To others, barred.
Some reach Thee at daybreak, while others
When night is starred.

Some bring Thee sweet offering
Of life that is fresh.
Some bring a free soul, while others
A soul in mesh.
Some bring Thee a strong body, and others
But bleeding flesh.

Some take years upon years to hear
Thy sacred Call.
Some cry for the light only when death's
Black shadows fall.
But throughout the aeons, alone, Thou waitest
Alike for them all.

Some bring Thee a well-tuned harp, and others
A shattered lyre.
Some come to Thee treading a path
Of beauty, Sire!
And behold! it was mine to reach Thee
Through a path of fire.

**But what does it matter whether
The way be sweet,
Or the way be thorny and difficult
And harsh to the feet,
So long as we are conscious of Thee whom
We go to meet?**

**There are so many ways of reaching Thee,
So many ways.
Some take eternities, while others
Just a few days.
Some reach Thee in a moment, others
Through long delays.**

LOYALTY

I HAVE taken the oath to reach my friend,
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.
I have taken the oath to reach the end,
And I'll keep to the oath, I know.
What does it matter if lightnings flash,
Leaving the sky like a vision of ash?
What does it matter if thunders crash?
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.

I have taken the oath to reach the goal,
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.
And nothing shall stop my travelling soul,
Nor hinder its speed, I know.
What does it matter if no flower springs,
Or no wind blows, and no bird sings?
I, loneliest of all lonely things,
Have taken the oath, and I'll go.

I have taken the oath to see his face,
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.
To bend at his feet and receive his grace,
And I'll keep to the oath, I know.
What does it matter if serpents rise
To bite at my heart or dart at my eyes?
My sweetness shall take their fangs by surprise,
For I've taken the oath, and I'll go.

I have taken the oath to ply the oar,
I have taken the oath, and I go.
To cross the dark water and reach the shore,
I have taken the oath, and I row.
What does it matter if darkness fall,

'And no star break, and no gull call?
My boat shall speed with its light through it all,
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.

I have taken the oath, at last, at last!
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.
I will tell him of all that I've borne in the past,
He will hear my story, I know.
I will tell him all without falsehood or guile,
He will hear my story—and after a while,
He will tenderly stroke my head with a smile,
And say, 'My child, I know!'

I have taken the oath to reach his feet,
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.
For there's nothing in all the world so sweet
As to take the oath, and go!
What does it matter if some mistakes
Creep into our lives—some little breaks?
What does it matter how long it takes?
I have taken the oath, and I'll go.

BUILDER

WITH what unmeasured joy
He maketh yon cloud
Wherein gold and crimson lurk,
And then doth destroy
His wonderful, proud
Sky-handiwork.

With what exceeding bliss
He worketh the blaze
Of sun-flower and rose,
And then with the kiss
Of winter erase
Their festive glows.

With what sweetness serene
He hangeth the dews
On soft blades of grass,
But then we have seen
God wills that their hues
Of rainbow pass.

All things that come
From the human tear
To the farthestmost star
Are a martyrdom
Of beauty a-near
To a Beauty a-far.

Read with the inner sight
In bird, bloom and sun,
This mystical text:
'Twixt the dark and the light

Whatever is done
Gives place to the next.

He alone shall build
In a manner supreme,
Authentic Creator,
Who, out of fulfilled
Beauty and dream
Moves on to a Greater!

SACRIFICE

INFINITY hath sacrificed
Itself within a dot,
For life around is greater-priced
Than man has ever thought.

I have beheld a very far
Self-offering of sky
Through but a single shooting star
Bidding the blue good-bye.

Yea, when I see a damsel pluck
One bloom of simple birth,
A sacrificial hour is struck
For the entire earth.

A tiniest sparkling fish can be,
Caught in a fisher's net,
The greatest sacrifice the sea
Has made to life as yet.

What an immeasurable price
Is set on worm and elf!
I am the deepest sacrifice
God made unto Himself.

SONG AND SILENCE

ALL my thoughts are turned to You
That I do record in song,
That is why they ring so true—
Not a note goes wrong.

All my dreams are ever poured
At Your feet like molten gold,
Each becomes a shining sword
For Your hands to hold.

And when silence comes to me,
I know that the Spirit dwells
In Your deep Immensity
Gathering new shells.

HOMAGE

HOW can the heart repay
These generousities
Of jasmine-scented clay
And mellow-coloured trees?
How pay, except through sight
Grown grateful to the light
That pours from far-away
Through man's eternities?

How can the lips declare
The value of these gifts
Of many-coloured air
Through which the daylight shifts
From silver-gold to red,
Recording every tread
Of clouds that pass like prayer
Which some high silence sifts?

How can I ever hope
To offer up in song
What is beyond its scope
And doth to hush belong?
How can I ever tell
Of dreams that in me dwell
Whose lights shall only ope
When I have ceased to long?

How can I ever praise
The depths that lie undreamed
In all my nights and days
Sombre and multi-gleamed?

How shall I praise the proud
Response of sea and cloud
To me, the pearly blaze
Of moons upon me streamed?

My consciousness is still
Unformed, unchiselled, rough!
Some day, some hour, it will
Grow to illumined stuff
Worthy to yield response
To eves and noons and dawns
Which can alone fulfil
Life's gratitudes enough!

IRONY

WHEN in the lonesome night and black
You gave my heart the gift of pain,
I prayed to you to take it back
Again!

When in your lovely cleansing fire
You cast me with my stain and dirt,
I cried for mercy: 'Love! I tire
Of hurt!'

And when, responding to my prayer,
You took them back, the ache, the flame,
I could not bear, I could not bear
The shame

Of emptiness, the bitter-black
Absence of Love's inflicted pain,
And cried to you, 'O give it back
Again,

'Give back again the bruise, the burn,
The lonely suffering that uplifts,
Pardon my prayer, and return
The gifts.'

MIRACLE

THOU hast made my life as full as a river,
As full as a river that flows to the sea,
Filling its tides, O rhythm-giver!
With a wide wonderful rhythm of thee.
Morning and evening, early and late,
The river goes seeking its ocean-mate,
Singing one only song, 'Can I wait
When the ocean, my lover is calling to me?'

Thou hast flooded the heart with a never-dwindling
Splendour of dawn that is sweet beyond words.
Deep in the bosom thy silence is kindling
The magical light that glimmers and girds
Some distant horizon unseen and afar,
Caught up to a point in thee, morning star!
The moments of time dripping into me are
The warbled notes of angelic birds.

I am tingling forever with innermost glory
A-bloom like a roseal vision of fire—
Thou art working each atom of me to a story
Of high-born experience seeking a higher.
Thou dwellest within me, a-striking inside
But visions that matter, and dreams that abide.
Already I feel that my being is dyed
In thy hues of the deathless, O deathless dyer!

Around me the shades of earth go changing,
The colours of sky, brief-blossoming, fade.
On heights of the spirit my thoughts go ranging
Like eagles of gold, untouched, unafraid.

See now, the whole world glitters and gleams
With the reflexed effulgence of my lone dreams!
After all, my beloved! it clearly seems
That my soul for high summits alone was made.

They come and they go, the earth's dim creatures,
Mere shadows of fate that pass me by.
With pain in their footfalls and death in their features—
I move like a silence 'twixt cry and cry.
For this body of mine, once sorrowful earth,
Through thy touch has suffered a rich re-birth;
The flowers of its moods have assumed a worth
That only thy grace can grant, O sky!

Thou hast emptied my life of its death and flooded
Its waiting hollows with life new-sown
Which here, in the midst of decays, hath budded
To starry ecstasies of the unknown.
Thou hast made me so silent, so wondrous mute,
That now thou canst play on my flesh like a flute,
The tune of the One and the Absolute
Whose each tone echoes thy master-tone.

SONG OF LIGHT

I AM sure that the morning light
Is born in the wild bird's throat,
For the coloured fire is struck out of night
By the spark of its early note.

Without it the dawns could never think
Of ever having occurred,
For their kingly orange and queenly pink
Depend on the voice of a bird.

O tireless poet! you never can tell
How long the night would go on
With no bird to break its inky spell
Making way for the lambent dawn!

And you also never can tell how long
The dark in your life would continue
If there were no bird to sing its song
Through the deep deep sleep within you!

INSPIRATION

FOR one who seeks the Word of Light,
The masterpiece is still to come
Forever. Thus it is I write,
Nor ever find it wearisome!

Tomorrow leaves today behind,
A bygone centuried outcast,
While it wakes up itself to find
The morrow name it of the past.

Each inspiration doth but lend
An inspiration to the next,
For what Thou grantest has no end,
O Light! from Thine own Self reflexed.

There cannot be a break or stop
To aught that comes direct from Thee—
Each word is as a golden drop
Dripped from Thy Goblets into me.

Each poem, Poet! is a brief
Self-revelation of Thy Bough
Of Silence in its fullest leaf
Which Thou dost to man's heart allow.

It is not merely that I sing,
But every song is as a goad
Which slowly strives to prompt and bring
My feet some way upon Thy road.

Through song, through every verse and line,
I reach Thee in a hundred ways,

And gradually grow Divine
By granting Thee my human praise.

For one who seeks the Light it seems
The masterpiece is never done,
Since at the end of mortal dreams
The Dream is hardly yet begun.

